

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Williams Foods Inc

#### Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center

#### Williams Foods Saves Using Lean Enterprise Program

##### Client Profile:

Williams Foods is a leader in the food manufacturing industry with products ranging from chili and taco seasoning, to brown and country gravy, to canned chili beans and diced tomatoes. Additional brands include SunBird, a line of Asian sauces and seasoning mixes; Wolferman's English Muffin Company; and Wagner Gourmet Foods, which offers a line of quality sauce mixes. Williams employs 205 people and manufactures over 100 retail products and hundreds more through private label, industrial and food service divisions located at its headquarters in Lenexa, Kansas.

##### Situation:

When C. L. Williams started selling chili seasoning out of his Missouri home in 1937, he had no idea his business venture would grow to become Williams Foods, a leading food manufacturer. With success came steady growth and the sale of the company in 1962 to Conrad Hock Jr., the current owner. Ultimately, the company's continued success created the need to streamline manufacturing processes. That's where the Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center (MAMTC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, stepped in, with a Lean Enterprise program that generated significant results for the company.

##### Solution:

MAMTC's project engineer designed a Lean Enterprise training program to directly impact the areas where Williams Food could improve their processes. The goals of the program were to organize areas of the plant, reduce times for product changeovers on the production lines, and shorten the lead time from sales order to plant floor. A group of Williams Foods' employees spent more than 67 hours learning how to implement new manufacturing plant floor processes to cut the time required for these tasks. MAMTC helped Williams Foods win a Department of Labor (DOL) Lean Certification Training Services grant that funded a large portion of the training, which was completed in November 2006. "The difference on the plant floor is obvious," said Ray Woods, plant superintendent. "We reorganized the departments to put certain functions together, so that the process could work more smoothly. We don't have nearly as much lost product, and product doesn't go out of date because we find it and use it on time. We've improved our shipping process by combining shipments on the same truck rather than shipping each order individually. That's saved us a bundle," he said. "Another action that has had a lot of impact was grouping people together and having them work on a project for a week to improve the process in that one area," Woods said. "MAMTC's unbiased partnership with Williams Foods helped the company achieve integrated process improvements that had a measurable affect on the bottom line."

##### Results:

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- \* Realized \$225,000 in cost savings.
- \* Invested \$15,000 in plant equipment.
- \* Invested \$10,000 in workforce development.
- \* Invested \$125,000 in other areas.

**Testimonial:**

"The MAMTC Lean Enterprise programs really focus on quality and efficiency; they're instrumental to helping us achieve our goals and remain a leading food manufacturer."

Ray Woods, Plant Superintendent